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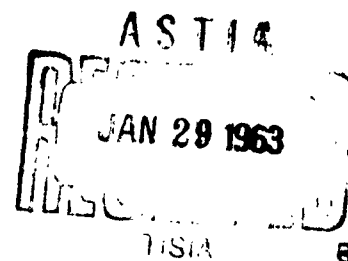
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TECHNICAL RESEARCH NOTE 124

**Peer Ratings as Predictors  
of  
Disciplinary Problems**



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**US ARMY PERSONNEL RESEARCH OFFICE**  
(An Activity of the Chief of Research and Development)

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USAPRO Technical Research Note 124  
PEER RATINGS AS PREDICTORS OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

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# **PREFACE**

The present publication reports on a portion of Subtask a, Analysis of Background and Behavior Factors Related to Retention in the Army, of the RETENTION STANDARDS Task, FY 1961 Work Program. The entire research task is responsive to special requirements of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, and furthers the U. S. Army Military Personnel Management objective of developing, and making available for operational use, research products to optimize the selection, classification, management, and utilization of Army personnel. Research in this Task has been continued under the ATTRITION REDUCTION Task, FY 1962 Work Program.

The RETENTION STANDARDS research task has focussed upon the early identification of soldiers who meet current induction and enlistment standards but whose cumulative record of performance in the Army would prove unacceptable. Acceptability is defined in terms of type of discharge received and disciplinary action incurred.

The ultimate goal of the research is the development of special measures to identify, prior to selection or during basic training, personnel who show little promise for later performance in any military assignment.

# BRIEF

## PEER RATINGS AS PREDICTORS OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

### Requirement:

Satisfactory means are needed to identify incoming soldiers who meet current induction or enlistment standards but whose Army performance is likely to prove unacceptable. Ratings during basic training were among available measures which needed evaluation as possible predictors.

Known differences between RA and US enlisted men in age and educational level raised the question whether the two groups differ appreciably in acceptability, and also whether component accounts for differences in acceptability not already accounted for by differences in age and education.

### Procedure:

Discharge, court-martial, and promotion records covering two years of service (three years in the case of three-year enlistees) were obtained for 1571 enlisted men entering the Army in 1955. Ratings obtained during basic training as well as test and background data were evaluated as predictors of behavior warranting disciplinary action. RA and US enlisted men were compared with respect to acceptability, and also with respect to prediction of acceptability achieved with tests and ratings.

### Findings:

Peer and cadre ratings of combat potential made as early as the 5th week of basic combat training showed substantial validity in predicting acceptability.

Previous findings that relatively more RA than US enlisted men present disciplinary problems warranting court-martial conviction or unfavorable discharge appeared to be accounted for partly by RA-US differences in educational level and age.

### Utilization of Findings:

Ratings during basic training should be explored further as predictors of disciplinary problems.

Since component adds little to prediction of acceptability already achieved with education and age, it is practicable to continue developing means of identifying the potential problem soldier with a view to use with both RA and US personnel.

# PEER RATINGS AS PREDICTORS OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

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## PEER RATINGS AS PREDICTORS OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

### BACKGROUND

Current Army enlistment and induction standards include cognitive measures such as the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) and tests of the Army Classification Battery (ACB) as well as physical profile and educational background. Considerable experience over the years had led to the establishment of these standards for selecting enlisted men with sufficient potential to succeed in training and on the job. However, the problem of identifying those enlisted men who are unwilling to perform adequately or to conform to Army standards of behavior has not been satisfactorily met. The RETENTION STANDARDS Task was established in response to a DCSPER requirement for the early identification of enlisted men who meet current induction or enlistment standards but whose cumulative record of performance in the Army is likely to prove unacceptable. Identification of such men early in basic training would save the cost of their training and avert embarrassment their behavior might cause the Army.

In the present study, ratings of basic trainees obtained from peers and cadre, as well as other experimental measures, were evaluated as predictors of acceptability as later evidenced by court martial convictions and type of discharge. In addition, certain differences between men who volunteer for Army service (RA) and men who are inducted through the selective service system (US) were explored. Regular Army enlisted men tend to have left school earlier, to be younger, and to report fewer childhood illnesses. The present study offered opportunity to test whether RA-US component, apart from the known differences in educational level and other background variables, accounted for significant criterion differences--that is, differences in acceptability to the Army as measured by type of discharge and court-martial record.

### PROCEDURES

Existing data from a study conducted in 1955 to evaluate experimental predictors of combat potential provided the basis for the desired analysis. Predictor instruments had been administered to 4000 basic trainees at Fort Riley, Kansas during 1955 shortly after the men entered service. Ratings of combat potential were obtained at the end of the fifth week of basic combat training. Predictors were validated against performance in an overseas unit. Two years after the original testing, information about court-martial convictions and promotions was extracted from personnel files. Type of discharge at the end of the first tour of duty was also obtained.

Predictors and the more recent criteria were analyzed with the following objectives:

1. To evaluate peer and cadre ratings obtained in the fifth week of basic training as predictors of behavior warranting disciplinary action by the Army.

2. To evaluate other experimental predictors, both cognitive and noncognitive.

3. To compare type of discharge and promotion records of RA and US enlisted personnel when mental ability differences were controlled.

## METHOD

### Samples

The original group consisted of 4103 enlisted men entering the 10th Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas, as trainee fillers in May 1955. Only 1571 men had complete data as needed for the present study. To provide the desired controls with respect to component and race, the group was broken down into RA and US Caucasian and Negro samples. The two Caucasian samples were further divided into those having a combat Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and those having a noncombat MOS. The subsamples used were as follows:

1. RA Caucasian, Combat (N = 547)
2. US Caucasian, Combat (N = 467)
3. RA Caucasian, Noncombat (N = 185)
4. US Caucasian, Noncombat (N = 186)
5. RA Negro, Combat and Noncombat (N = 118)
6. US Negro, Combat and Noncombat (N = 68)

### Criterion Variables

Acceptability. The acceptability criterion was divided into three categories for comparison purposes:

1. Other-than-honorable discharge
2. Honorable discharge with one or more court-martial convictions
3. Honorable discharge with no court-martial convictions.

For computation of validity coefficients, the discharge variable was dichotomized into category 3 above vs categories 1 and 2 combined, thus dividing the men into a favorable and a generally unfavorable category.

Promotion. Enlisted grades E-1 through E-7 in which the examinee was serving 20 months after initial testing. This variable applied only to examinees who were in category 3 of the acceptability criterion (honorable discharge with no court-martial convictions).

## Predictor Variables

### Rating Variables.

1. Average peer rating obtained during the fifth week of basic combat training. A 7-point graphic rating scale of combat potential was accomplished by fellow trainees.
2. Average fifth-week cadre rating. Procedures were the same as for peer ratings, but ratings were by cadremen.
3. Average fifth-week peer and cadre ratings combined. An equally weighted composite.

### Experimental Test Scores.

1. The Army Self-Description Blank, DA PRT 2712. A personality questionnaire based on item analysis data from USAPRO's Arctic and Korean studies, as well as other USAPRO validity studies.
2. Interest-Opinion Questionnaire, DA PT 2817. An instrument developed by the Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO) through item analysis of instruments administered during the Korean Fighter-Factor studies.
3. Personality BIB. A biographical information blank combining USAPRO and HumRRO personality items.
4. General Information Test, DA PT 2839. A test designed to measure interest in masculine-type outdoor activities.
5. General mental ability. The General Technical (GT) Aptitude Area, an equally weighted composite of the verbal and arithmetic reasoning tests of the Army Classification Battery.

### Age at enlistment.

### Years of education.

## - Statistical Operations

Using the dichotomized type-of-discharge criterion, biserial validity coefficients were computed for all predictors in the total group and separately in each of five subsamples (The US Negro subsample was not large enough to justify the computations). Intercorrelations among all predictors were computed for the total group.

Within each subsample the percentages of men falling into each of the three acceptability categories were computed. RA and US samples were compared with respect to these percentages and the differences tested for significance. For men in each sample falling in the honorable-discharge, no court martial category, mean grade after 20 months was computed. Critical ratios were computed across subsamples.

For each of the six subsamples, means and standard deviations of test and rating measures were computed within each of the three acceptability categories.

A partial correlation coefficient for RA-US component against the criterion was computed with age and educational level held constant. This computation was applied only in the combined RA-US Caucasian subsample, because of the small numbers of cases in the combined low criterion categories.

## RESULTS

### Prediction of Acceptability among RA and US Enlisted Men

In general, the three fifth-week ratings yielded consistently larger correlation with the dichotomized acceptability criterion than did any of the test or background variables examined in the present study (Table 1). The peer rating had the highest validity in the total sample ( $r = .42$ ). The relationship was in all samples positive; that is, acceptability to the Army tended to be associated with the higher ratings, and unacceptability as evidenced by court-martial conviction and/or other-than-honorable discharge tended to be associated with relatively low ratings. The result is the more noteworthy when it is remembered that these were ratings of combat potentialities. Evidently the cadre and peer raters of these men did not subscribe to the popular notion that the man who is always getting into trouble makes a good fighter.

In terms of mean scores on the predictor variables, men in the honorable-discharge-with-court-martial-conviction category were found to be no more similar to the honorable-discharge-with-no-court-martial category than they were to men with other-than-honorable discharges. An earlier study (Klieger and Dubuisson, 1961) indicated that the procedure of combining the middle category with the low category for criterion purposes was satisfactory. However, an inspection of validity coefficients obtained for fifth-week average peer ratings using a trichotomous breakout of the acceptability criterion<sup>1/</sup> led to the belief that higher validity would have been obtained under the present project had this trichotomous criterion been employed.

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<sup>1/</sup> Unpublished USAPRO research study conducted by the Behavioral Evaluation Research Laboratory, 1960: Relationship of Predictor and Criterion Ratings to Promotion-Retention-Rejection. In this study, which involved the same group and some of the variables used in the present study, triserial correlation coefficients were computed within subsamples of combat-noncombat examinees. Comparison of these triserial coefficients for the variables common to both studies with their biserial counterparts in this present study revealed some substantial differences in size of coefficients favoring the triserial approach.

Table 1

CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN THE DICHOTOMIZED ACCEPTABILITY  
CRITERION AND TEN PREDICTOR VARIABLES

Variables	<u>SUBSAMPLES</u>					Total Group
	<u>Combat MOS</u>		<u>Noncombat MOS</u>		<u>Combat and Non- combat Combined</u>	
	RA Cauc.	US Cauc.	RA Cauc.	US Cauc.	RA Negro	
Age at Entry	.01	.04	.17	.36	.09	.23
Yrs. of Education	.21	.38	.21	.22	.04	.37
Personality BIB (USAPRO + HumRRO Items)	.16	.16	.23	.24	.00	.22
USAPRO Items	.12	.06	.22	.28	-.02	.16
HumRRO Items	.17	.24	.20	.17	.02	.24
General Information Test	.19	.30	.14	.15	.14	.31
General Technical Aptitude Area	.15	.44	.20	.39	.06	.33
Av. 5th-wk. Peer Rating	.25	.37	.48	.30	.31	.42
Av. 5th-wk. Cadre Rating	.22	.37	.26	.12	.20	.30
Av. 5th-wk. Peer and Cadre Rating Combined	.26	.42	.48	.30	.30	.40

In the two largest comparable subsamples, RA and US Caucasians with combat MOS, the size of the validity coefficients for both ratings and tests was consistently larger in the US subsample than in the RA subsample. The relationship was less consistent in the noncombat RA-US subsample, but not contradictory so far as cognitive tests were concerned. Ratings, however, were consistently better predictors in the RA subsample.

#### Intercorrelation of Predictor Variables

Table 2 reports intercorrelations of the predictor variables computed for the combined subsamples. Peer and cadre ratings correlated .53. Coefficients between the rating and non-rating variables were generally in the 20's and 30's. Intercorrelations among the non-rating variables were somewhat higher than those between the rating and non-rating variables. Intercorrelations between age and all other variables were the lowest obtained.

#### Acceptability of RA and US Enlisted Men

Type of discharge criterion. Of the RA Caucasian subsample, almost 13% received other-than-honorable discharges as compared to 2% of the US Caucasian subsample (Table 3). When the unfavorable category was enlarged to include men honorably discharged but with records of court-martial conviction, the totals were 23.5% of the RA Caucasians and 6.7% of the US Caucasians. Both intercomponent differences in percentages were significant at the .01 level (critical ratios of 7.48 and 27.19, respectively). In the RA and US Negro subsamples, corresponding differences between percentages falling in each acceptability category were not significant at the .01 level.

Promotion criterion. The promotion variable was analyzed only for men in the honorable discharge-no court-martial conviction criterion category because of the reduction in grade concomitant with disciplinary action.

US Caucasians (both combat and noncombat) had a higher mean grade at 20 months of service than did the corresponding RA subsamples (Table 4). For the combat subsample, mean grade for the US men was 3.54, approximately midway between grades E-3 and E-4; mean grade for the RA enlisted men was 3.31 (nearer to grade E-3). The critical ratio between these means was 5.50, significant at the .01 level. For the noncombat subsamples, a critical ratio of 2.96, also significant at the .01 level, was found between the mean grades of 3.42 for the US and 3.22 for the RA. In the Negro subsamples, the .03 difference in mean grade between RA and US (combat and noncombat) was clearly not significant.

Interpretations of findings on grade are limited by several considerations. The distributions on grade were heavily centered about the means, primarily because of two particular aspects of the grade continuum: First, the 20-month sampling imposed a severe restriction on time for

Table 2

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND INTERCORRELATION FOR TEN PREDICTORS  
(Total Group N = 1571)

Variable	M	SD	Intercorrelations						
1. Age at Entry	19.3	2.2	<u>1</u>						
2. Yrs. of Education	10.6	2.1	.33	<u>2</u>					
3. Personality BIB (USAPRO + HumRRO Items)	303.4	53.2	.13	.35	<u>3</u>				
4. USAPRO Items	65.4	12.2	.12	.31	.90	<u>4</u>			
5. HumRRO Items	139.6	29.0	.11	.33	.89	.60	<u>5</u>		
6. General Information Test	43.5	12.6	.25	.47	.56	.40	.60	<u>6</u>	
7. General Technical Aptitude Area	98.4	18.9	.20	.63	.52	.39	.53	.65	<u>7</u>
8. Av. 5th-wk. peer rating	3.9	.9	.25	.30	.35	.31	.32	.35	.29 <u>8</u>
9. Av. 5th-wk. cadre rating	3.8	1.3	.17	.23	.28	.23	.27	.29	.26 .53 <u>9</u>
10. Av. 5th-wk peer and cadre rating combined	3.9	8.9	.23	.29	.35	.30	.33	.36	.31 .82 .68 <u>10</u>

Table 3

PERCENTAGES OF RA AND US SUBSAMPLES RECEIVING  
UNFAVORABLE DISCHARGE AND COURT-MARTIAL CONVICTION

Subsample	Total	Unfavorable Discharge		Combined Unfavorable Discharge and Court- Martial Cases	
	N	N	% of Total	N	% of Total
1. RA Cauc., Combat	547	72	13.2	131	24.0
2. US Cauc., Combat	467	12	2.6	37	8.9
3. RA Cauc., Noncombat	185	21	11.4	41	22.2
4. US Cauc., Noncombat	186	1	.5	7	3.7
5. RA Negro-Total	118	20	16.9	40	33.8
6. US Negro-Total	68	12	17.6	16	23.5
RA Cauc. (Subsamples 1 and 3)	732	93	12.7	172	23.5
US Cauc. (Subsamples 2 and 4)	653	13	2.0	44	6.7
Total Group	1571	138	8.8	272	17.3



Table 4

## PREDICTOR MEANS AND GRADE MEANS FOR THREE ACCEPTABILITY CATEGORIES

Variable	Discharge Category <sup>a</sup>	Combat MOS		Noncombat MOS		Combat and Noncombat		All Subsamples Combined
		RA Cauc.	US Cauc.	RA Cauc.	US Cauc.	RA Negro	US Negro	
Grade at 20 Months <sup>b</sup>	3	3.31	3.54	3.22	3.62	3.28	3.31	----
Age at Entry	3	18.8	20.2	18.6	20.7	18.3	20.4	19.4
	2	18.0	19.6	17.8	19.2	18.2	19.3	18.4
	1	18.5	20.9	18.5	----	18.0	20.1	18.8
Years of Education	3	9.8	11.3	10.2	11.9	9.9	10.2	10.7
	2	9.4	10.2	9.6	11.0	10.0	11.0	9.8
	1	9.0	8.8	8.4	----	9.4	9.2	9.1
Personality BIB (USAPRO + HumRO Items)	3	305.0	310.0	306.0	310.0	270.0	271.0	304.0
	2	295.0	298.5	286.0	275.0	274.0	279.0	290.0
	1	287.0	284.0	280.5	----	266.0	276.0	282.0
USAPRO Items	3	65.6	66.1	65.9	66.8	62.6	64.7	65.7
	2	62.9	66.4	61.3	58.5	64.3	66.8	63.4
	1	63.2	60.8	60.2	----	61.6	65.3	62.5
HumRO Items	3	140.8	144.7	141.2	142.6	113.1	109.4	139.5
	2	137.3	132.3	132.4	128.5	112.4	110.8	130.7
	1	128.5	131.8	130.1	----	112.0	112.7	125.4
General Information Test	3	41.9	46.9	43.6	47.1	30.5	29.6	43.3
	2	38.4	39.6	42.3	44.8	26.9	22.8	37.3
	1	37.5	40.8	39.1	----	30.1	29.8	36.2
General Technical Aptitude Area	3	93.9	102.6	100.3	106.4	80.6	82.1	97.9
	2	91.8	89.8	94.2	93.5	79.6	80.5	89.7
	1	87.9	79.4	94.2	----	78.2	76.5	85.6
Av. 5th-week Peer Rating	3	3.8	4.2	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.0	4.0
	2	3.6	3.9	3.2	3.6	3.5	2.6	3.6
	1	3.2	2.8	3.0	----	3.0	3.4	3.1
Av. 5th-week Cadre Rating	3	3.7	4.0	3.7	4.1	3.4	3.7	3.8
	2	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.8	3.2	1.8	3.3
	1	3.0	2.6	3.0	----	3.1	2.9	3.0
Av. 5th-week Peer and Cadre Combined Rating	3	3.8	4.1	3.9	4.2	3.7	3.9	4.0
	2	3.6	3.8	3.2	3.6	3.5	2.6	3.5
	1	3.2	2.8	3.0	----	3.0	3.4	3.1
Sample Size <sup>c</sup> (N)	3	416	430	144	179	78	52	1299
	2	59	25	20	6	20	4	134
	1	72	12	21	1	20	12	138
Total N		547	467	185	186	118	68	1571

<sup>a</sup>3 = Honorable discharge-no court-martial convictions.<sup>2</sup>2 = Honorable discharge-one or more court-martial convictions.<sup>1</sup>1 = Other-than-honorable discharge.<sup>b</sup>Computed only for Category 3 examinees.<sup>c</sup>US Negro Subsample sizes very slightly due to missing data. Mean grade at 20 months was computed separately on larger subsamples.

promotion eligibility beyond the E-3 level. Second, few individuals with acceptable service records fail to gain promotion to the grade of E-3 or above. In addition, even though significant differences were found between samples on grade, in terms of specific rank the modal grade level for all samples was E-3.

#### Partial Correlation

RA-US component correlated .32 with the acceptability criterion in the combined RA-US Caucasian sample. Little change could be expected to result from partialling out any but the most highly correlated variables. Nonetheless, the validity coefficient of .32 was reduced to .14 when age and educational level were held constant (Table 5).

Table 5

PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS UTILIZING THE ACCEPTABILITY CRITERION, COMPONENT (RA-US), AND SELECTED VARIABLES  
(N = 1014)

Variable	Correlation Coefficients				
	Zero-order Correlation <sup>a</sup>				
1. Criterion	<u>1</u>				
2. Component	.32	<u>2</u>			
3. General Technical Aptitude Area	.28	.22	<u>3</u>		
4. Age	.17	.48	.04	<u>4</u>	
5. Education	.38	.44	.60	.14	<u>5</u>

#### Partial Correlation

<u>First-order</u>	<u>Second-order</u>
$r_{12.3} = .28$	$r_{12.34} = .23$
$r_{12.4} = .28$	$r_{12.35} = .18$
$r_{12.5} = .18$	$r_{12.45} = .14$

<sup>a</sup>Correlation coefficient of criterion with component is a biserial phi. Correlation coefficients of criterion with the remaining variables are biserials. Coefficient of component with General Technical Aptitude Area, age and education are point biserials.

First- and second-order partial correlation coefficients between component and the acceptability criterion suggest that variability in educational level accounts for much of the RA-US difference. It is likely that most of the remaining difference in performance between enlistees and inductees can be attributed to personality characteristics unique to each component. The relatively greater weight for education as against the General Technical Aptitude Area (Table 5) reverses the finding in the earlier Fort Leonard Wood study in which the Armed Forces Qualification Test carried more weight than education.

## CONCLUSIONS

Peer and cadre ratings of combat potential made as early as the fifth week of basic combat training showed substantial validity in predicting acceptability ( $r$ 's in the 30's and 40's). Since the ratings showed higher validity than any of the other experimental predictors, further exploration of their utility for this purpose is desirable.

The importance of establishing the validity of ratings for a criterion of acceptability extends well beyond the objective of identifying potential disciplinary cases. Ratings obtained from peers and cadre are a part of procedures to select enlisted men for participation in such Army-wide programs as OCS, NCO academy training, Special Forces, recruiter assignment, and various forms of specialist training. The present finding adds assurance that men being selected for these programs partially on the basis of peer and cadre ratings are good risks from a disciplinary standpoint.

The RA Caucasian subsamples (combat and noncombat) were found to have proportionally larger numbers of men receiving other-than-honorable discharges and/or court-martial convictions than corresponding US Caucasian subsamples. Similar comparisons of smaller RA and US Negro subsamples did not show significant differences. Results obtained by partialling out the effects of educational level from the correlation between component and acceptability suggest that differences in education partially account for the RA-US differences found in this and in previous studies.

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Peer and cadre ratings of basic trainees and other experimental  
cognitive and personality measures were evaluated as predictors  
of acceptability (defined in terms of court-martial conviction  
and type of discharge) in a sample of 1571 men entering the Army  
in 1955. Fifth-week ratings proved to be more predictive of  
the acceptability criterion ( $r = .40$ ) than did any of the other  
measures investigated. In both enlistees (EA) and inductees (US)  
samples, EA-US component, apart from age and educational level,  
was somewhat related to acceptability (partial  $r = .14$ ) but to a  
significantly lower degree than without control on age and  
education ( $r = .32$ ).

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incl. 5 tables, 5 Ref. (USAPRO Technical Research Note No. 124).  
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